

# THOMPSON, CHENEY, LURIA, & KINZINGER OPENING STATEMENTS AT SELECT COMMITTEE HEARING

Jul 21, 2022

- As Delivered -

**Chairman Thompson:** “Good evening.

“Earlier this week, I received a positive COVID diagnosis. Per CDC Guideline, I received the initial two shots and all of the boosters.

“Thus, so far, I have been blessed to experience very minimum symptoms.

“Because I am still quarantined, I cannot participate in person with my colleagues. I’ve asked our Vice Chair, Ms. Cheney, to preside over this evening’s hearing, including maintaining order in the room and swearing in our witnesses.

“Over the last month and a half, the Select Committee has told the story of a President who did everything in his power to overturn an election.

“He lied. He bullied. He betrayed his oath. He tried to destroy our democratic institutions.

“He summoned a mob to Washington. Afterward, on January 6th, when he knew that the assembled mob was heavily armed and angry, he commanded the mob to go to the Capitol.

“And he emphatically commanded the heavily armed mob *‘TO FIGHT LIKE HELL.’*

“For the weeks between the November election and January 6th, Donald Trump was a force to be reckoned with. He shrugged off the factually and legally correct sober advice of his knowledgeable and sensible advisors.

“Instead, he recklessly blazed a path of lawlessness and corruption; the costs of which democracy be damned!

“And then he stopped.

“For 187 minutes on January 6th, this man of unbridled, destructive energy could not be moved—not by his aides, not by his allies, not by the violent chants of rioters or the desperate pleas of those facing down the riot.

“And more tellingly, Donald Trump ignored and disregarded the desperate pleas of his own family, including Ivanka and Don Jr.

“Even though he was the only person in the world who could call off the mob he sent to the Capitol, he could not be moved to rise from his dining room table and walk the few steps down the White House hallway into the Press Briefing Room.

“Where cameras were anxiously and desperately waiting to carry his message to the armed and violent mob savagely beating and killing law enforcement officers, revenging the Capitol, and hunting down the Vice President and various members of Congress.

“He could not be moved.

“This evening, my colleagues Mr. Kinzinger of Illinois and Ms. Luria of Virginia will take you inside the White House during those 187 minutes.

“We also remind you of what was happening at the Capitol, minute by minute, as the final, violent, tragic part of Donald Trump’s scheme to cling to power unraveled while he ignored his advisors, stood by, and watched it unfold on television.

“Let me offer a final thought about the Select Committee’s work so far.

“As we’ve made clear throughout these hearings, our investigation goes forward.

“We continue to receive new information every day. We continue to hear from witnesses.

“We will reconvene in September to continue laying out our findings to the American people.

“But as that work goes forward, a number of facts are clear.

“There can be no doubt that there was a coordinated, multi-step effort to overturn an election overseen and directed by Donald Trump.

“There can be no doubt that he commanded a mob—a mob he knew was heavy-armed, violent, and angry—to march on the Capitol to try to stop the peaceful transfer of power.

“And he made targets out of his own Vice President, and the lawmakers gathered to do the people’s work.

“These facts have gone undisputed.

“And so, there needs to be accountability. Accountability under the law. Accountability to the American people.

“Accountability at every level: from the local precincts in many states where Donald Trump and his allies attacked election workers for just doing their jobs.

“All the way up to the Oval Office where Donald Trump embraced the illegal advice of insurrectionists that a federal court judge has said was ‘a coup in search of a legal theory.’

“Our democracy withstood the attack of January 6th.

“If there is no accountability for January 6th—for every part of this scheme—I fear that we will not overcome the ongoing threat to our democracy.

“There must be stiff consequences for those responsible.

“Now I’ll turn things over to our Vice Chair to start telling this story.

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**Vice Chair Cheney:** “Let me begin tonight by wishing Chairman Thompson a rapid recovery from COVID.

“He has expertly led us through eight hearings so far, and he has brought us to the point we are today.

“In our initial hearing, the Chairman and I described what ultimately became Donald Trump’s seven part plan to overturn the 2020 Presidential election.

“A plan stretching from before election day through January 6th. At the close of today’s hearing, our ninth, we will have addressed each element of that plan.

“But in the course of these hearings, we have received new evidence; and new witnesses have bravely stepped forward. Efforts to litigate and overcome immunity and executive privilege claims have been successful, and those continue.

“Doors have opened, new subpoenas have been issued, and the dam has begun to break.

“And now, even as we conduct our ninth hearing, we have considerably more to do. We have far more evidence to share with the American people, and more to gather.

“So, our Committee will spend August pursuing emerging information on multiple fronts, before convening further hearings this September.

“Today, we know far more about the President’s plans and actions to overturn the election than almost all members of Congress did when President Trump was impeached on January 13, 2021, or when he was tried by the Senate in February of that year.

“57 of 100 Senators voted to convict President Trump at that time, and more than 20 others said they were voting against conviction because the President’s term had already expired.

“At the time, the Republican Leader of the U.S. Senate said this about Donald Trump:

Leader McConnell reached those conclusions based on what he knew then, without any of the much more detailed evidence you will see today.

“Lawlessness and violence began at the Capitol on January 6, 2021 before 1 p.m. and continued until well after darkness fell.

“What exactly was our Commander in Chief doing during the hours of violence?

“Today, we address precisely that issue.

“Everything you have heard in these hearings thus far will help you understand President Trump’s motives during the violence.

“You already know Donald Trump’s goal – to halt or delay Congress’ official proceedings to count certified electoral votes.

“You know that Donald Trump tried to pressure his Vice President to illegally reject votes and delay the proceedings.

“You know he tried to convince state officials and state legislatures to flip their electoral votes from Biden to Trump.

“And you know Donald Trump tried to corrupt our Department of Justice to aid his scheme.

“But by January 6th, none of that had worked. Only one thing was succeeding on the afternoon of January 6th. Only one thing was achieving President Trump’s goal.

“The angry armed mob President Trump sent to the Capitol broke through security, invaded the Capitol, and forced the vote counting to stop.

“That mob was violent and destructive. And many came armed.

“As you will hear, Secret Service Agents protecting the Vice President were exceptionally concerned about his safety, and their own.

“Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy was scared.

“As were others in Congress, even those who themselves helped provoke the violence.

“And as you will see today, Donald Trump’s own White House Counsel, his own White House staff, and members of his own family, all implored him to immediately intervene, to condemn the violence, and instruct his supporters to stand down and leave the Capitol, and disperse.

“For multiple hours, he would not.

“Donald Trump would not get on the phone and order the military or law enforcement agencies to help.

“And, for hours, Donald Trump chose not to answer the pleas from Congress, from his own party, and from all across our nation to do what his oath required.

“He refused to defend our nation and our Constitution.

“He refused to do what every American President must.

“In the days after January 6th, almost no one of any political party would defend President Trump’s conduct.

“And no one should do so today.

“Thank you and I now recognize the gentlewoman from Virginia.”

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**Rep. Luria:** “Thank you, Madam Vice Chair.

“Article II of our Constitution requires that the President swear a very specific oath every four years.

“Every President swears or affirms to ‘faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States’ and, to the best of their ability, ‘preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.’

“The President also assumes the Constitutional duty to ‘take care’ that our nation’s laws be ‘faithfully executed,’ and is the ‘Commander in Chief’ of our military.

“Our hearings have shown the many ways in which President Trump tried to stop the peaceful transfer of power in the days leading up to January 6th.

“With each step of his plan, he betrayed his oath of office and was derelict in his duty.

“Tonight, we will further examine President Trump’s actions on the day of the attack on the Capitol.

“Early that afternoon, President Trump instructed tens of thousands of supporters at and near the Ellipse rally, a number of whom he knew were armed with various types of weapons, to march to the Capitol.

“After telling the crowd to march multiple times, he promised he would be with them, and finished his remarks at 1:10pm like this:

“By this time, the Vice President was in the Capitol, the Joint Session of Congress to certify Joe Biden’s victory was underway, and the Proud Boys and other rioters had stormed through the first barriers and begun the attack.

“Radio communications from law enforcement informed Secret Service and those in the White House Situation Room of these developments in real time.

“At the direction of President Trump, thousands more rioters marched from the Ellipse to the Capitol and they joined the attack.

“As you will see in great detail tonight, President Trump was being advised, by nearly everyone, to immediately instruct his supporters to leave the Capitol, disperse, and halt the violence.

“Virtually everyone told President Trump to condemn the violence in clear and unmistakable terms.



“And those on Capitol Hill, and across the nation, begged President Trump to help.

“But the former President chose not to do what all of these people begged.

“He refused to tell the mob to leave until 4:17, when he tweeted out a video statement filmed in the Rose Garden, ending with this:

“By that time, two pipe bombs had been found at locations near the Capitol, including where the Vice President-elect was conducting a meeting. Hours of hand-to-hand combat had seriously injured scores of law enforcement officers.

“The Capitol had been invaded.

“The electoral count had been halted as members were evacuated.

“Rioters took the floor of the Senate they rifled through desks, and broke into offices, and they nearly caught up to Vice President Pence.

“Guns were drawn on the floor of the House and a rioter was shot attempting to infiltrate the chamber.

“We know that a number of rioters intended acts of physical violence against specific elected officials.

“We know virtually all the rioters were motivated by President Trump’s rhetoric that the election had been stolen, and they felt they needed to take their country back.

“This hearing is principally about what happened inside the White House that afternoon from the time when President Trump ended his speech until the moment when he finally told the mob to go home: a span of 187 minutes.

“More than 3 hours.

“What you will learn is that President Trump sat in his dining room and watched the attack on television, while his senior-most staff, closest advisers, and family members begged him to do what is expected of any American President.

“I served proudly for twenty years as an officer in the United States Navy.

“Veterans of our armed forces know firsthand the leadership that is required in a time of crisis: urgent and decisive action that puts duty and country first.

“But on January 6th, when lives and our democracy hung in the balance, President Trump refused to act because of his selfish desire to stay in power.

“I yield to the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Kinzinger.”

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**Rep. Kinzinger:** “Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. Luria.

“One week after the attack, Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy acknowledged the simple truth —President Trump should have acted immediately to stop the violence.

“During our investigation, General Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also remarked on the President’s failure to act. Let’s hear what they had to say:

“Like my colleague from Virginia, I am a veteran.

“I served in the Air Force and I serve currently in the Air National Guard.

"I can tell you that General Milley's reaction to President Trump's conduct is 100% correct, and so was Leader McCarthy's.

"What explains President Trump's behavior?

"Why did he not take immediate action in a time of crisis?

"Because President Trump's plan for January 6th was to halt or delay Congress' official proceeding to count the votes.

"The mob attacking the Capitol quickly caused the evacuation of both the House and Senate.

"The count ground to an absolute halt and was ultimately delayed for hours.

"The mob was accomplishing President Trump's purpose, so of course he did not intervene.

"Here is what will be clear by the end of this hearing: President Trump did not fail to act during the 187 minutes between leaving the Ellipse and telling the mob to go home.

"He chose not to act.


"But there were hundreds that day who honored their oaths and put their lives on the line to protect the people inside the Capitol and to safeguard our democracy.



"Many of them are here tonight with us, and many more are watching from home.

"As you already know, and will see again tonight, their service and sacrifice shines a bright light on President Trump's dishonor and dereliction of duty.

“I yield to the Vice Chair.”

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